

have a magic wand down there, because you all continue to discharge duty after duty, oftentimes newly assigned duties, with the same amount of money. And I don't know how they do it, but they do.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate concurrent resolution, S. Con. Res. 103.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 889, COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 2006

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill (H.R. 889) to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2006, to make technical corrections to various laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of April 6, 2006 at page H1640.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alaska.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 889.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alaska?

There was no objection.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 889, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006.

This bill authorizes \$8.7 billion in funding for the Coast Guard, including \$1.6 billion for the recapitalization of Coast Guard vessels, aircraft and support systems.

Funding at this level would result in the acceleration of the Deepwater program and would provide a new, more capable fleet to support the Coast Guard's many traditional and homeland security missions.

The conference report also includes provisions related to Coast Guard's response in the regions that were af-

ected last year by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the impacts of the storms on the maritime industry.

The conference report also requires safety inspection for passenger ferries, makes it easier to prosecute illegal drug smugglers, encourages the construction and use of U.S. flag liquefied natural gas vessels, enhances maritime security by increasing penalties for violations of the Maritime Transportation Security Act, and adjusts oil spill liability limits for the first time since the Oil Pollution Act was passed in 1990.

H.R. 889 also includes legislation passed by the House as H.R. 1412, the Delaware River Protection Act.

This bill was introduced by the Coast Guard Subcommittee chairman, our colleague from New Jersey, Mr. FRANK LOBIONDO. I commend him for his hard work on this measure.

H.R. 889 is a truly bipartisan bill and deserves the support of each Member of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairmen YOUNG and LOBIONDO and Ranking Members OBERSTAR and FILNER for their hard work in bringing this conference report to the floor. It has been a long time coming, and I am glad to see the finish line ahead.

Every time this country faces an emergency, the Coast Guard is the first agency on the scene. The Coast Guard was the first agency to react to the terrorist attacks on September 11 and within minutes was guarding our ports and bridges and directing maritime traffic out of New York. They were also the only agency in the Bush administration to actually do their job during the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. That is worth repeating: they were the only agency in the Bush administration to actually do their job during the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. And they are still in the gulf region supporting the recovery effort.

They respond to these emergencies all while completing their core missions of search and rescue, drug interdiction, and enforcing maritime and fisheries laws.

Fortunately, the Transportation Committee realizes how important the Coast Guard is and has once again stepped up to the plate and provided the Coast Guard the true amount of funding they need to do their job. I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill and support full funding for the U.S. Coast Guard. It is simply the right thing to do for America.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to the chairman of the subcommittee who has done an outstanding job, a man who under-

stands the Coast Guard and really has been leading the Coast Guard for the last 6 years, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO).

Mr. LOBIONDO. I thank the chairman for yielding, and I would like to thank Chairman YOUNG for his ongoing very strong support for the Coast Guard and their maritime missions.

H.R. 889, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act, authorizes nearly \$8.7 billion in funding for the Coast Guard in fiscal year 2006. This authorization includes funding to support each of the Coast Guard's important missions, including many that have been highlighted in response to the tragedy that occurred in the gulf region last year.

The Coast Guard is a unique entity within the Federal Government, as both a military service and a Federal agency with law enforcement abilities and wide regulatory responsibilities. The men and women of the Coast Guard carry out their missions every day to protect the safety and security of our Nation. Whether the mission involves saving thousands of lives, responding to oil spills, keeping our ports and waterways open, or boarding a suspicious vessel, the men and women of the Coast Guard work tirelessly.

However, we cannot allow the commitment that is being shown by the men and women of the Coast Guard to go on without a real commitment by this body to provide the service with the assets and resources necessary to carry out all of these missions that we have asked them to do. H.R. 889 will authorize the funding levels required to do just that.

H.R. 889 authorizes \$1.6 billion for the Coast Guard's Integrated Deepwater System, a critically important system. Every day our Coast Guard servicemembers must deal with the unfortunate reality that an aircraft or boat they command may lose power, spring a leak, or otherwise fail to operate. This is unacceptable. It puts the safety of our personnel and the success of their mission in real jeopardy. We must accelerate Deepwater to make replacement assets available now. I urge my colleagues to support funding levels in this bill and in the future to make this a reality.

H.R. 889 also includes important oil spill response and liability provisions originally included in the Delaware River Protection Act legislation that I introduced, along with Representatives SAXTON, CASTLE, ANDREWS, and SCHWARTZ, in the wake of the Athos I oil spill in the Delaware River. These provisions represent the first real effort in 15 years to strengthen our Federal oil spill prevention and response system. This bill will provide the Federal Government with the authorities that will enhance our capability to prevent and respond to future oil spills.

Once again, I would like to thank Chairman YOUNG for his strong support, Ranking Member OBERSTAR, as well as subcommittee Ranking Member

FILNER for working with me to develop a strong bipartisan product. I would also like to thank our dedicated staff on both sides of the aisle for their work: John Rayfield, Eric Nagel, and Liz Megginson on the majority staff, and John Cullather on the minority staff, who did an outstanding job in helping us put this conference report together.

The bill takes a balanced approach to providing the resources and authorities necessary to support each of the Coast Guard's many and varied missions. Although the Coast Guard has received a great deal of attention for its port security mission, we must strive to protect the service's unique multi-mission character. We must maintain a Coast Guard with the ability to successfully accomplish each of its vital missions.

I would like to urge all my colleagues to support this important bill and continue to support the men and women of the Coast Guard who do such an exceptionally good job for the United States of America.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I echo the words of Mr. LOBIONDO. This Coast Guard that serves this great Nation of ours has done such an outstanding job over the years in my 34 years in Congress that I can only just applaud each time I see a Coast Guard vessel or a member of the Coast Guard or the flag that they carry.

It is a unique privilege, being in a State that has probably the greatest challenge of all the States and probably the most involved with the Coast Guard. When I first arrived in Congress, we had one Coast Guard station, actually two, one in Juneau, which was a command station, and one in Ketchikan, which was relatively small. Since that time, over the last 34 years, we now have, I believe, the largest Coast Guard unit in the United States on Kodiak Island.

They do a great job not only patrolling and watching for foreign interference of our fishing fleet, but saving my constituents. Many times they go out in weather, and I don't know how many of you watch the show of the most dangerous fishing, the "Dangerous Catch," they call it, but there you will see the Coast Guard involved rescuing people in hundred mile winds, or knots, of seas of about 40 feet, 50 feet, sometimes. Even so bad that it took a helicopter down last year when they were trying to rescue people off a foreign ship that was carrying soybeans.

But they do not only that, but they watch for oil spills which pollute our seas. They do it for the little fisherman going out in the small dinghy, in larger seas than he should have, to catch those big King salmon Alaska has that belongs to Alaska and doesn't belong to Washington State or Canada. And sometimes they get in trouble, and the Coast Guard is there. And the young

men and women that enlist and stay voluntarily for years and years, I just compliment them.

This bill is a good bill. As mentioned by Mr. LOBIONDO, John Rayfield has done outstanding work. There were very tiring times, especially in conference, because we are dealing with a conference, and they are very difficult in this business we are in. Conferences with the other side are equally difficult but sometimes ridiculous in the sense of what we have to negotiate for. But we believe we have negotiated a good conference. Liz Megginson, my legal counsel, has done very well on this legislation.

And for my colleagues, this is the end of 2006 as far as the authorization for the Coast Guard. As of today, we will be introducing a 2007 reauthorization bill; and we will be working on that, hopefully with expedited results, and getting the bill out of the House and to the Senate to decide and maybe having the finalization and being ahead of the ball game. That is what we are going to attempt to do to try to make sure that the Coast Guard gets the recognition, the organization, the authorization and be able to fulfill the mission that they have and will continue to have.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to once again thank Chairman YOUNG and Mr. LOBIONDO and Ranking Members OBERSTAR and FILNER for their hard work on this bill.

The Coast Guard, once again, is the first agency on the scene that is doing their job; and I am very pleased that we finally have a bill that we are going to send to the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I would just close by urging my colleagues to support this legislation.

The House has under consideration the conference report (109-413) to the bill H.R. 889 to authorize appropriations for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2006, to make technical corrections to various laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for their hard work shepherding through the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2005, and to express my strong support of the bill.

It authorizes \$8.7 billion for the Coast Guard for fiscal 2006, which will be used to perform the essential duties of the U.S. Coast Guard in the areas of homeland security, maritime safety, law enforcement, environmental protection, and emergency response: a mission area in which the Coast Guard led the pack in responding to Hurricane Katrina. To support these activities, the conference report authorizes \$500 million in additional emergency funds for Katrina response.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight a provision that I offered and was accepted by the Committee last July and is included in this conference report. It directs the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a study of the

pollution in Newtown Creek caused by underground oil spills in Brooklyn, N.Y. The study is to be fully funded through the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. As outlined in section 410 of the conference report, this study is to be completed no later than one year after enactment of this law.

Newtown Creek is a 3.5 mile long waterway that flows from the East River and separates the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. The State of New York has ruled that the Creek does not meet water quality standards under the Clean Water Act. It is the single most polluted waterway in New York City, and its banks are home to the largest oil spill in the United States. The spill is 150 percent the size of the Exxon-Valdez spill.

In 1978, a Coast Guard patrol detected petroleum on the surface of Newtown Creek and identified a spill that spreads from the banks of the Creek through the Greenpoint neighborhood in Brooklyn. Evaluations at that time identified a spill totaling 17 million gallons attributed to refineries operated along the banks of the Creek by the predecessors to ExxonMobil, BP/Amoco and Chevron-Texaco. To date, 8.7 millions gallons have been cleaned but estimates indicate it will take at least 25 more years to finish the remediation, primarily conducted by ExxonMobil under a 1990 consent agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that sets no timetable for completion and includes no meaningful criteria for compliance.

Even though it has been over 25 years since the oil spill was detected, the public health and safety risks associated with the oil spill are still unknown.

The legislative intent of the amendment that directs the Coast Guard to study Newtown Creek (Creek) is for the Environmental Protection Agency to revisit the findings of the U.S. Coast Guard's July 1979 report entitled "Investigation of Underground Accumulation of Hydrocarbons along Newtown Creek," and address the following issues:

The actual current size of the Greenpoint Oil Spill (Spill) and the extent to which oil from each refinery site contributes to the Spill.

The extent and severity of surface water pollution and sediment contamination from the Spill, and methods to prevent further seepage into the Creek.

The Spill's impact on existing conditions in the Creek including but not limited to low levels of dissolved oxygen and high levels of bacteria.

The interaction between pollution from the Spill and pollution from other sources in the Creek including but not limited to Combined Sewer Overflow Pipes and the Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Plant.

The extent to which oil and contaminated sediments in the Creek disperse into New York Harbor.

The extent to which the Spill has affected aquatic species in the Creek and Harbor, and methods to prevent further harm.

The extent to which the Spill has affected groundwater in the surrounding area, and methods to prevent further harm.

The extent and severity of contaminated soil in the area affected by the Spill, and methods to prevent further harm.

Any public health issues raised by the Spill and the current remediation efforts, both independently and in interaction with other pollutants in the Creek.

Any safety issues raised by the Spill and the current remediation efforts, both independently and in interaction with other pollutants in the Creek.

The extent to which the current remediation efforts are sufficient, and any new technologies or approaches that could accelerate product recovery and/or improve the scope of the remediation.

I would like to express my thanks to Chairman YOUNG, Mr. OBERSTAR, Chairman LOBIONDO, and Mr. FILNER for their willingness to work with me on this very important yet often overlooked issue. The country will benefit from renewed Federal attention on this oil spill, the largest in the country.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my Democratic colleagues in the New York City delegation, all of whom signed a letter to conferees urging that this study be included in the conference report. I would especially like to commend Mrs. VELÁZQUEZ, who represents the people of Greenpoint. She and I have worked together closely on this initiative.

Additionally, I would like to thank both the Democratic and Republican staff of the Transportation Committee and the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. In particular, Ward McCarragher and John Cullather of Mr. OBERSTAR's staff and Fraser Verrusio and John Rayfield of Mr. YOUNG's staff were very helpful.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill, H.R. 889.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4843) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2006, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4843

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, effective on December 1, 2006, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of such title.

(4) NEW DIC RATES.—The dollar amounts in effect under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 1311(a) of such title.

(5) OLD DIC RATES.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(a)(3) of such title.

(6) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH MINOR CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under section 1311(b) of such title and paragraph (1) of section 1311(f) of such title (as redesignated by subsection (e) of this section).

(7) ADDITIONAL DIC FOR DISABILITY.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1311(c) and 1311(d) of such title.

(8) DIC FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN.—The dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—

(1) BASE FOR INCREASE.—The increase under subsection (a) shall be made in the dollar amounts specified in subsection (b) as in effect on November 30, 2006.

(2) PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE.—Except as provided in paragraph (3), each such amount shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2006, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(3) ROUNDING.—Each dollar amount increased pursuant to paragraph (2) shall, if not a whole dollar amount, be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount.

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) DESIGNATION CORRECTION.—Section 1311 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by redesignating the second subsection (e) (added by section 301(a) of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-454; 118 Stat. 3610)) as subsection (f).

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

At the same time as the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2006, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in subsection (b) of section 2, as increased pursuant to that section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from In-

diana (Mr. BUYER) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4843, as amended, is one of the more important bills the committee brings to the floor each year.

On April 6 of this year, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, chaired by Mr. MILLER of Florida, took testimony on H.R. 4843. The subcommittee then marked this bill on June 8 and reported the bill favorably to the full committee by unanimous voice vote. The full committee reported the bill, as amended, on June 22.

H.R. 4843, as amended, would provide a cost-of-living adjustment, a COLA, to disabled veterans and certain survivors in the same amount given to Social Security recipients. All veterans who receive disability compensation and qualified survivors would receive the adjustment beginning December 1 of this year. Congress has acted on COLA legislation every fiscal year since 1976.

More than 2.6 million veterans receive service-connected disability compensation. These benefits are paid monthly and range from \$112 for a 10 percent disability to \$2,393 for a 100 percent disability. Additional monetary benefits are available for our most severely disabled veterans, as well as those with dependents.

Spouses of veterans who died on active duty or as a result of a service-connected disability may also be entitled to monetary compensation. The amount of the dependency and indemnity compensation is \$1,033.

Additional amounts are paid to survivors who are housebound or in need of aid and attendants or have minor children. Currently, about 340,000 surviving spouses and children are receiving survivors' benefits.

The amendment to the bill by Ms. BERKLEY would also provide a COLA to the dependency and indemnity compensation transitional benefit. Established in Public Law 108-454, transitional DIC is a 2-year benefit; and it is intended to ease the family's transition following the death of a service member or veteran.

The Congressional Budget Office is projecting a 2.2 percent COLA increase, but it may be higher or lower depending upon the changes in the Consumer Price Index. The exact percentage will be calculated as of September 30, 2006.

The cost of providing a COLA is assumed in the administration's budget baseline; therefore, it will be budget neutral. Additionally, H.R. 5385, the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill of 2007 fully funds a veterans' COLA effective December 1, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.